



From Planned to Funded

73 Percent of Active Transportation Funds Allocated

Caltrans recently added a strategic goal to triple cycling and double walking and transit use statewide by 2020, making bicycle and pedestrian facilities integral components of the statewide transportation system. It helps that Caltrans already assists local agencies in navigating the various state and federal funding requirements necessary to build their transportation projects. For the Active Transportation Program (ATP), which funds most of California's walking and biking projects, these requirements include time limits. For example, a project must receive its allocation of funding in the same year that it's "programmed," essentially meaning when it has been identified as a priority project worth funding. Caltrans set a goal that 100 percent of project funds programmed are successfully allocated for the ATP.

As of July 1, 2015, the California Transportation Commission, or CTC, had programmed \$102.3 million of funds for 188 ATP projects for 2014-15. As of that same date, \$74.9 million, or approximately 73 percent, of those funds had been allocated. Of the unallocated funds, 24 percent were approved for time extensions. The local agency chose to use local funds for the remaining 3 percent, allowing these unallocated funds to revert to the ATP to fund additional projects.

The Road to Funding

As with many transportation projects, the path for funding ATP projects comes in stages: application, selection, and programming and allocation. The key with transportation programming is assembling a package of projects to be funded for a certain period, given budget constraints and funding priorities. When a project is "programmed," its funding has been identified and it is added to an

agreed-upon list of specific priority projects called the Transportation Improvement Program. In the case of the ATP, it is a list approved by the CTC. This, however, doesn't yet represent a commitment of funds or an obligation to fund for that project.

Once an ATP project is programmed, the design, environmental and right-of-way phases can begin. This includes information about the project's ultimate scope, schedule and cost, as well as studies to analyze the project's environmental effects. During this process, Caltrans' Division of Local Assistance provides guidance and support, and the local agencies are responsible for ensuring these studies and documents are in order. Once they are, the project is ready to be formally approved by the CTC to receive an allocation of funding for construction.

There are time limits, however: funding allocations for a project must be made in the same year in which the funding is programmed. The laws requiring the prompt use of funds are intended to encourage local and regional agencies to accurately program, monitor and deliver projects in a timely manner. More accurate programming and project delivery also enables the CTC to manage and plan future transportation funding more effectively.

Coming Up Next

For the 2015-16 fiscal year, 184 ATP projects worth \$266.9 million were programmed. This is the remaining portion of money that was set aside for Cycle 1 of the ATP. Cycle 1 represents three fiscal years' worth of funding (13-14, 14-15 and 15-16). The agencies that applied for this project funding have until June 30, 2016, to fulfill any necessary documentation and to request that these programmed funds be allocated.

The bicycle and pedestrian projects funded by the ATP not only encourage increased use of active modes of transportation, but they support sustainable communities and healthier, low-carbon travel choices. Caltrans will continue to do its part in helping local and regional agencies deliver biking and pedestrian projects throughout California in an efficient and effective manner.

*Source: Division of Local Assistance
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